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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 000290

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SPECIAL ENVOY FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE MITCHELL
STATE ALSO FOR S, P, S/P, NEA, NEA/MAG AND IO/UNP
NSC FOR SHAPIRO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: MOROCCO,S ROLE IN MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1
.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Senator Mitchell, we warmly welcome your proposed trip to Morocco. King Mohammed VI and his government are anxious to exchange ideas with you. Morocco can play an important, if secondary, role in the Middle East Peace Process. The Government of Morocco (GOM) is supportive of the Annapolis Process, has been a strong backer of President Abbas and is perhaps the sole Arab state to refuse any dealings with HAMAS. It also has cordial, open and high-level, if irregular, contacts with Israeli officials. Moroccan Jews living in Israel, many of whom support Likud, maintain strong ties to Morocco. However, internal anger over recent Israeli actions in Gaza forced the GOM and Palace to temper their public support for Israel although back-channel communication continues. The King, as Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference,s (OIC,s) Al-Quds Committee, is in a position to use his influence and good offices to positive effect, and he has called the first Committee meeting in seven years for May 1 and 2. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Morocco can play an important, if secondary, role in the Middle East Peace Process. A population of hundreds of thousands of Moroccan Jews in Israel (historically key supporters of Likud) continues to maintain some ties to the one percent of the original Jewish population that remains here. The pillars of Moroccan society have been vocal about their tolerance toward that remaining community, stressing the historical and continuing contribution of its Jewish citizens to the Moroccan state. Even members of Islamist parties that complain about the depth of continuing ties with Israel stress their appreciation of the Jewish community. Their policy critiques have failed to disrupt continuing trade ties. Then-Prime Minister Shimon Peres, trip to Morocco in 1986 helped energize the peace process and take the heat off Egypt and Jordan. Post-Oslo, Israel opened a liaison office here, but the Government of Morocco (GOM) closed it during the Intifada.

¶3. (S) We have briefed the Foreign Minister (FM) on details of the Annapolis negotiations, and he has been supportive. He and his colleagues in the government believe an agreement is possible, although they are uncertain where the process will go with the new Israeli government. The GOM has been a strong backer of President Abbas and perhaps the sole Arab state to refuse any dealings with HAMAS. It may have some ideas of how to move forward.

¶4. (S) Recently, Morocco has continued to maintain quiet diplomatic contacts with Israel. It has been a supporter of President Sarkozy,s Union for the Mediterranean and the inclusion of Israel in the structure. It continues to permit and even invite Israeli representatives to attend international conferences here.

Aborted Outreach to Israel

15. (S) In November 2008, former Israeli Foreign Minister Sylvan Shalom (of Moroccan origin) and several current Israeli senior officials, including an adviser to then Israeli Foreign Minister Livni, attended a public conference on the Mediterranean that was sponsored by a think tank run by the son of Foreign Minister Fassi Fihri. The Minister had an unannounced bilateral meeting with the Israelis, whom he has met in international settings, including with Livni during the Fall 2008 Quartet meetings in Sharm el Sheikh. At that time, Moroccan officials acknowledged they were looking at enhancing their relations, but discussions about a possible dramatic step, including a possible visit here by Livni, were put on hold following the Israeli intervention in Gaza.

The Gaza Factor

16. (S) The fighting caused the same widespread public outrage as was felt across the region. Party leaders from both government parties and the opposition participated in increasingly large protests. The Islamists, both the legal Party for Justice and Development and the tolerated Justice and Good Works religious-political movement (Adl Wa Ihssane) helped swell the crowds and used the demonstrations to increase their own popularity, until they were checked by the

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government. The end of the incursion and change of U.S. administrations defused the protests, but the fighting and lingering issues appear to preclude any near-term public action by the GOM, absent major progress on the Israeli-Palestinian front (including Gaza).

The Jerusalem Committee

17. (SBU) King Mohammed VI inherited his father's mantle as Chairman of the Al-Quds or Jerusalem Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The Committee is responsible for preserving the Islamic holy places in Jerusalem and the Islamic character and population of the ancient city. The Committee has a related Fund, based in Rabat and headed by Abdelkebir Alaoui M'daghri, a former Minister of Islamic Affairs under the late King Hassan II. The Fund runs relatively modest projects to support sites and the people of Jerusalem, some of which also benefit citizens of other religions.

18. (SBU) King Mohammed VI long kept a relatively low profile on this issue but has increased activity of late with a further increase post-Gaza, in part to keep him ahead of the rising curve of public anger on the issue. In this capacity, King Mohammed wrote then-President Bush protesting Government of Israel (GOI) plans to demolish some Palestinian Homes in Jerusalem, and then raised it again with the new Administration. We understand the Secretary raised this with the GOI; recalling this will be appreciated by the Moroccans. We also understand that the King has called for a meeting of the full Committee, possibly at the head-of-state level, at the beginning of May, to discuss threats to the holy city, and perhaps, future prospects for peace. As an OIC entity, the Committee can potentially be a mechanism for mobilizing support from the broader Islamic world, along the lines of the Arab Peace Initiative.

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Jackson